

15. *FULICA ATRA.*

The Coot is said to have increased largely in numbers since the completion of the irrigation works in the Famagusta district. In October 1901 I saw enormous numbers of these birds on the large reservoir at Kouklia, and made an entry in my note-book to the effect that the water in places was black with them. I was told that they build in the corn-fields round the edge of this water, and that the natives collect and eat great quantities of their eggs.

16. *CICONIA ALBA.*

Apparently the only notice of the White Stork occurring in Cyprus is that made by Lord Lilford in his "List." He writes, that when at Galinaporni, in the Karpass, he saw a large flock of these birds flying landwards from the south, but did not see them alight on the island. On October 27th, 1901, when on the way to Kouklia Marsh I observed three standing in some low-lying cotton-fields, but there being no cover behind which to approach them we failed to secure one. After being fired at they circled overhead and remained in the air for some time, while later we noticed that they had returned and settled again in the same cotton-fields.

XLI.—*On a presumed new Species of Redstart from the Island of Sardinia.* By HENRY H. GIGLIOLI, H.M.B.O.U. &c.

ON the 1st of December, 1902, I received from a correspondent at Lanusei, in the island of Sardinia, two small birds, which were evidently Redstarts, but were quite new to me and caused me no small surprise, being totally different from anything I had seen during well-nigh forty years of experience in Italian ornithology.

They had been captured alive on the 25th of November, 1902, in a haystack during a northerly gale, at Loceri, a village in the hills above Lanusei, in the Ogliastra district, just beneath the Gennargentu mountain group, on the east side of Sardinia. The shepherd who caught them put them

alive into a lamp or lantern, not having a cage, and took them down to Lanusci to my correspondent Signor Meloni, who bought them while yet alive but in a bad plight with soiled and ruffled plumage. He tried to revive them, but was unsuccessful, so he skinned them and at once sent me the two skins and fortunately the bodies also, which he had dipped in alcohol. He had determined the sexes himself, and is a reliable person; it was well that he did so, for when I examined the bodies I was only able to confirm the sex in the male, in the female the genital organs had been taken out along with the viscera.

The most striking character of these birds is the colour of their plumage, for both male and female are entirely of a sooty black, the tail-feathers alone shewing traces of the orange-brown so characteristic of the genus *Ruticilla*. At first sight I thought that they were specimens of *R. titys*, dyed black; but a closer inspection dispelled this idea at once; and I felt puzzled at the strange and unexpected case, though I was fully convinced that the two birds before me were specimens of a distinct and hitherto undescribed species, for which I have suggested the appropriate name of *Ruticilla nigra**.

The two skins were quite fresh, but in a rather ruffled condition; the orange-yellow of the inside of the mouth was fresh and brilliant. The generic characters were patent, and there could be no doubt that the birds belonged to the genus *Ruticilla*. I had them mounted, and the pectoral arch and sternum of each prepared; I also got a sternum of an adult male *R. titys*, for comparison. Finally, I wrote to Signor Meloni asking him to get me, if possible, more specimens of this singular bird, but up to the present he has not been successful in doing so. The two specimens, adult male and female, types of *Ruticilla nigra*, are now in the Central Collection of Italian Vertebrates in the Royal Zoological Museum at Florence, where they bear respectively the Nos. 3906, 3907 of the Bird Series.

I shall now give briefly the distinctive characters of this

* See Bull. B. O. C. xiii. p. 79 (1903).

new form, comparing it with *R. titys*, which appears to be its nearest ally.

Compared with the last-mentioned species, the general dimensions of *R. nigra* are decidedly less, as will be seen clearly from the measurements given below.

In the *male, evidently adult in full autumn plumage*, the general colour of the upper parts is deep black slightly glossed with dark olive on the back; quills black, the outer webs of the secondaries narrowly margined with dark grey; wing-coverts black; upper tail-coverts of a dull blackish orange-brown; tail-feathers of the same colour, especially on the basal portion of their inner webs, becoming of a sooty brownish black towards their extremities, the two central entirely of this colour; the shafts of all the tail-feathers are, however, orange-brown, brighter on the underside, where the dirty orange-brown of the webs is more widespread and evident. Throat, sides of head and neck, breast, flanks, under wing-coverts, and axillaries deep black with a very slight olivaceous sheen; inner margin of quills greyish; abdomen and vent grey tinged with black; under tail-coverts blackish-olive. Bill, legs, feet, and claws black; inside of mouth orange-yellow; eyelids black.

	<i>Ruticilla nigra.</i>		<i>Ruticilla titys.</i>	
	♂. mm.	♀. mm.	♂. mm.	♀. mm.
Length of wing	83	83	86	84
" tail	62	62	65	60
" culmen	10	9 $\frac{1}{3}$	11	10
" tarsus	22	21 $\frac{1}{2}$	24	23

The *adult female in full autumn plumage* differs very slightly from the male, and this constitutes one of the main features of this extraordinary species, for it is quite exceptional in the genus *Ruticilla*, in all the other known species of which the plumage is notably different in the adults of either sex. In *R. nigra* the coloration of the female is the same as that of the adult male, only the black on the upper and on the under parts is slightly duller, and on the latter the greyish tinge and olive gloss are more marked;

the grey margins of the secondaries are more apparent on the wings, and the tail-feathers are somewhat darker. The measurements compared with those of two adult examples of *R. titys* are given above (p. 583).

The comparison of the sternum of the two species has shown differences far greater than I ever expected to find in members of the same genus, especially in a "compact" genus such as *Ruticilla*, in which the species are so closely allied.

Thus, in *R. titys* the pectoral arch is more robust in its general characters, for, in both sterna of *R. nigra*, we observe the more slender and less curved *clavicles*, and the shorter and thinner *scapulæ*; the *coracoids* are, however, decidedly longer than in *R. titys*, but have a less prominent crest. The *sternum* is narrower than in the latter species and longer, the difference being quite a millimetre; finally, the *pre-sternum* or *manubrium* is also larger in *Ruticilla nigra* and the *episternal apophyses* are larger and more slender. On the whole, we may say that the sternum is more robust in *R. titys*, slighter and more slender in *R. nigra*.

XLII.—*A Contribution to our Knowledge of the Birds occurring in the Southern Shan States, Upper Burma.* By Lt.-Col. C. T. BINGHAM.

(Plates XI. & XII.)

IN the 'Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,' vol. lxxix. pt. ii. (1900), Mr. H. N. Thompson, Deputy-Conservator of Forests, and I gave a list of the birds collected or observed by us during a short tour we made in the Southern Shan States, Upper Burma. Since my return to England, Mr. Thompson has continued collecting and in company with Mr. W. H. Craddock, also of the Forest Department, who has materially assisted him, has visited various parts of the same States, including the remote and little-known valley of the Mékong, and the high ranges, rising to 8000 or 9000 ft., between that valley and the Salween. Messrs. Thompson and Craddock have been good enough to forward their collection to me. It contains examples of many species not seen or